

In solitary confinement in dark and loathsome dungeons, or to let our prisons become sinks of vice and misery or schools of crime. The selective effect of punishment is the one which we seem to aim at, although not very intelligently.

213. Mass phenomena of fear and hope. Manias and delusions are mental phenomena, but they are social. They are diseases of the mind, but they are epidemic. They are contagious, not as cholera is contagious, but contact with others is essential to them. They are mass phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Some great hope (the good to be obtained by taking the heads of murdered men or from appeasing the gods by sacrificing one's children) or some great fear (drought, failure of food, purgatory), if common to the whole, makes them adopt any suggestion of a means to realize the hope or avert the feared calamity. Often there is no such quasi-rational reason for common action. Hysteria, especially amongst women and children, produces manias of falsehood, deceit (fasting women), trances, and witchcraft. In mediaeval convents sometimes half the inmates were afflicted at the same time.

Nervous depression and irritation produced physical acts of relief. One irritated another, and one surpassed another, until there was a catastrophe for the group.<sup>2</sup> Religious enthusiasm has produced innumerable manias and delusions. Mediaeval Christianity, Mohammedanism, Persia, and modern Russia furnish cases. Martyrdom proves nothing with regard to the truth or value of a religion. All the sects have had martyrs. Martyrdom, even under torture, has been sought, under the influence of religious enthusiasm, not only by Christians<sup>3</sup> but by Donatists,<sup>4</sup> Manichseans, and other most abominated heretics. Even the Adamites produced martyrs who

went joyously to death.<sup>5</sup> Quakers really  
provoked their own  
martyrdom in early New England.  
214. Manias, delusions. The phenomena of  
manias, popular  
delusions, group hallucinations, self-immolation,  
etc., show the  
possibilities of mental contagion in a group. They  
are responses  
to hope or fear which affect large numbers at the  
same time.

<sup>1</sup> Achelis, *Die Ekstase*, 113.  
391.

<sup>8</sup> Lecky, *Eur. Morals*, I,

<sup>2</sup> Regnard, *Sorcellerie*, 45.

\* Gibbon, Chap. XXI.

<sup>5</sup> Lea, *Inquis.*, II, 518